

Washington, DC -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) led members of the newly formed congressional Defense Energy Security Caucus (DESC) this week in urging Defense Secretary Leon Panetta to embrace the Pentagon's research and use of renewable sources of energy and spare any related programs from upcoming budget cuts.

In a letter sent to Panetta yesterday, Hinchey, who is founder and chair of the DESC, and his colleagues noted that, "Investments in smart energy plans will not only show returns in security and mission success but they will contribute to future cost savings and have a unique opportunity to help foster innovative and diverse energy and clean technologies to strengthen our economy. Reducing our energy consumption is one of the easiest ways we can reduce cost to the DoD and we ask that you both challenge and demand that the Services and every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, and Marine accept this responsibility."

Hinchey established the DESC last month with Representatives Roscoe Bartlett, Jack Kingston, and the Office of Gabrielle Giffords, who serve as co-chairs. The caucus intends to be a forum through which the Department of Defense, the Armed Forces, energy industry, and members of Congress can exchange ideas and give defense energy security policy an additional platform that will contribute to mission success, protect lives, save money, and safeguard the environment. The caucus website can be accessed at <http://desc.hinchey.house.gov/>.

Hinchey, who is a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, has led the effort in Congress to require the military to increase its use of renewable sources of energy. Earlier this year, President Obama signed into law a provision authored by Hinchey, which requires that any solar energy panels purchased by the Department of Defense through subcontracts are made in the U.S. Hinchey's measure dealt with the Buy American Act, which requires products purchased directly by the federal government to contain at least 50 percent of American content. The Hinchey measure applies the Buy American Act to the procurement of solar panels purchased indirectly by the Pentagon through subcontracts such as Energy Savings Performance Contracts, land leases, and utility service contracts.

Joining Hinchey in sending the letter to Panetta were: Reps. Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD) -- a DESC co-chair; Jack Kingston (R-GA) -- a DESC co-chair; Earl Blumenauer (D-OR); Lois Capps (D-CA); John Garamendi (D-CA); Jay Inslee (D-WA); Steve Israel (D-NY); Jim Langevin (D-RI); and the Office of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ) -- a DESC co-chair.

The full text of the letter to Panetta follows:

August 10, 2011

The Honorable Leon Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC
20301-1300

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As members of the Congressional Defense Energy Security Caucus, along with the Office of Gabrielle Giffords, we write to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Secretary of Defense and to introduce you to this newly formed caucus. For several years, we have advocated for the need to address critical vulnerabilities to our national security based on our military's dependence on both fossil fuels and the national electrical grid. The Department of Defense has prioritized this issue and, as members of Congress, we recognized the strength of unified voices and the need for a formal Congressional Member Organization to highlight this very important issue for our colleagues.

The mission of the bi-partisan Defense Energy Security Caucus is to educate members of Congress and the public about the strategic value of utilizing conservation, efficiency and sustainable energy sources for the U.S. military; highlight and support established and emerging defense energy initiatives; and to help find solutions to energy challenges facing the Armed Forces and the Department of Defense. The caucus serves as a forum through which the DoD, the Armed Forces, energy industry, and members of Congress can exchange ideas and give defense energy security policy an additional platform that will contribute to mission success, protect lives, save money, and safeguard the environment.

Recently, we held an event to officially kick-off the caucus and enjoyed a wonderful attendance by industry, DoD, and Congressional staff. Assistant Secretary Sharon Burke joined us as the guest speaker and eloquently explained the DoD's new operational energy strategy. As you know, the Department of Defense's focus on energy sustainability is not simply a fad or fly-by-night fancy. Releasing the military from the tether of fuel, as General Mattis so aptly put it, will facilitate the mission and save lives in the process. We enthusiastically support the June 2011 memorandum entitled "Supporting the Mission With Operational Energy" that General

Petraeus sent to the forces under his command in Afghanistan outlining the importance of conserving and tracking the use of battlefield energy. We encourage you to put the full weight of your office behind Assistant Secretary Burke's operational energy strategy, General Petraeus' memorandum, and other life-saving efforts to control fuel demand.

As you stated in your August 3, 2011 message to all DoD personnel, the Department is facing unprecedented fiscal challenges and spending choices must be based on sound strategy and policy. Recognizing the critical importance of mission energy requirements, we urge you to prioritize the Department's energy policies and budgets. Investments in smart energy plans will not only show returns in security and mission success but they will contribute to future cost savings and have a unique opportunity to help foster innovative and diverse energy and clean technologies to strengthen our economy. Reducing our energy consumption is one of the easiest ways we can reduce cost to the DoD and we ask that you both challenge and demand that the Services and every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, and Marine accept this responsibility.

We look forward to working with you on this very important issue and await your reply.

Sincerely, Maurice Hinchey & his DESC colleagues